

## Climate Change Workshops in the Pacific

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“I come from the coldest part of [Papua New Guinea] in Western Highlands Province. In the past, we did not have bananas, peanuts or corn growing. However, during the past 15-years, I’ve noticed these food crops—bananas, peanuts and corn—were growing. This indicates that the Earth’s temperature is rising. Also some of our animals, such as Bird of Paradise used to stay in my village. Now, you’ll hardly see any. They are leaving the area for colder places.” -Lawrence Mai, Miokep Village, Western Highlands Province, PNG

Warmer or colder, wetter or drier, we all see differences in the daily weather, and over time we see the patterns emerge as climate. These topics were well discussed recently in a workshop series conducted in Port Moresby and Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and the Republic of Nauru. I was accompanied by Dr. Than Aung and Dr. Chalapan Kaluwin in PNG and was briefly joined in Nauru by Dr. Aung. We covered many exciting topics and the teachers practiced activities that illustrate concepts in climate change, such as El Niño, clouds, solar radiation, ozone hole, sea level rise, greenhouse effect, microclimates, coral reefs, tsunamis, and human involvement. We had pre- and post- workshop evaluations, curriculum books, Weather Explained books, and supplemental materials for each participant.

The first workshop was conducted in Port Moresby at the PNG National Weather Service facility. This workshop lasted 4.5 days, and was attended by 38 teachers. Two participants were Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) staff invited as part of a newly forming collaboration with ARM Education. WCS has permanent staff in the region, and are interested in gaining expertise in climate change so that they can help promote ARM. In both Port Moresby and Manus, we did a lesson on tree kangaroos in support of research conducted by both WCS and Dr. Lisa Dabek of the Roger Williams Park Zoo (RWPZ), Rhode Island. The workshop also included a field trip to the Weather Service facility.

The second workshop was on Manus Island, and had 39 teachers attending. Three teachers came from the Huon District in the PNG highlands, and were invited as part of the newly forming collaboration with WCS and the RWPZ. Mr. Fosse Mura, headmaster of Isam Village, gave a presentation on the connection between his village and the education being done by WCS and ARM. On the fifth day of the workshop, Dr. Kaluwin led a field trip to the ARM site.

The final workshop was held in the Republic of Nauru at the Menen Hotel conference room. We had 41 teachers and principals who participated. The workshop was for 3.5 days, and included a field trip to the ARM site. I also did a tour of all the schools, primary, secondary, high school around the island.

An important part of the workshops was the valuable information we gained from our participants. We had the opportunity to discuss their knowledge of climate change impacts from their own experiences, and from passed down stories. One of the goals of ARM Education is to incorporate local knowledge into our educational materials, so that traditional knowledge as well as current science is represented for students. Not only are we interested in increasing the understanding of basic science concepts by using global climate change as a forum, we are interested in encouraging everyone to act as local weather “experts” in their own region.

I can’t thank everyone enough for all of the work and effort that went into these very successful workshops!



TWP Teacher demonstrating a classroom activity learned from ARM Education at the Nauru workshop.



Teachers at Manus workshop doing the "Cloud in a Jar" activity.



Manus teachers learn one of the ARM classroom activities.



Weather balloon launch at teacher tour of ARM Site in Nauru.